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Senate

BETTER EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS ACT

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I am grateful to both Senators.

Senator Kerry offered two wonderful amendments. I am pleased to be an original cosponsor of both of them. I thank him for his leadership.

We have spent a fair amount of time talking about academic standards we have set in our schools and other States have set in their schools. We have spent a fair amount of time acknowledging tests are being taken to measure student progress and we need to hold folks accountable--schools, school districts, and teachers.

It has been acknowledged again and again how important having a good teacher in a classroom is to enable all students to reach the standards that are being set in their respective States.

Professional development of teachers is critical in my State of Delaware, obviously Massachusetts, and other places. Senator KERRY put his finger on it. It is not enough just to work on the professional development of the teachers or to make sure we have teachers who know their business, know their stuff, love to teach, love kids in our classrooms, but it is critically important that the men and women leading those schools, the principals and assistant principals, learn how to do their jobs well.

One of the toughest jobs going these days is not as a Member of the Senate, not even President of the United States. I think one of

the toughest jobs in America today is trying to be principal of a school and run the school with all of its challenges--the kids, the curriculum, Federal and State regulations coming at them, dealing with the parents, many of whom are not present in the lives of their children, passing referendums. It is a tough job.

The idea that we acknowledge not just that it is a tough job but say to States, you can use some of this Federal money to make sure more of the people leading our schools know how to do their tough job well, is just a wonderful step we are taking.

The second thing I want to say with respect to funding, providing the possibility for Federal funds for alternative schools for chronically disruptive students, is that every child can learn. Children who are chronically disruptive came to school behind, started behind, and fell further behind. In many cases they did not have parents engaged in their lives and may not have had the right teachers. Even those kids can learn. They may need to be in a classroom other than the one they are sitting in today or this year. They may need to be in a different school, but they can learn in a different school. If we include in the alternative for disruptive students trained educators and leaders who know how to work with those students who come from tough backgrounds, those kids can learn and can meet the standards, as well.

Our role is not to say to States that they have to use this money to train school leaders and principals; our job is not to say they have to use this to provide for alternative schools for disruptive students; but with the amendments we make it an

option.

I commend Senator Kerry and Senator SMITH from Oregon for joining in offering this amendment. I am pleased to stand in support.